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Argument of the Play.

ACT FIRST.—The Betrothal.

Scene 1st. The best room in the house of the bride's parents. Enter the bride, her parents and a young brother; they tidy and adorn the room; a table is set with sweetmeats, nuts and small beer (*braga*). The old people finally sit down at the table and talk to each other; the bride and her brother stand at a little distance, talking apart. 584

Scene 2d. The proceedings now about to begin, are similar to the usual winter night social gatherings—*posidelky*—which are frequented by the young people of the village. [574]

Enter the girl friends of the bride, with their spinning combs (*prialki*) their knitting and sewing; soon after them arrive the young men of the neighbourhood. The bride meets and welcomes them; the girls sit down in a circle in the middle of the room, laughing and chatting; the young men stand around them talking and joking, treat them to nuts, candy, etc. Different songs appropriate to the occasion are sung by the company, *e. g.* "The Birchwood Splinter"—*Lootchina* (No. 5)[1], "I was sitting late at night"—*Posdno Vetcherom Sidela* (No. 6)[2], etc. Suddenly there is a loud rapping, the songs cease, and everybody looks towards the door.

Scene 3d. Enter the two *svats* (matchmakers); they bow respectfully to the parents, with a "good morning, good people," to the girls, "good mornings, beautiful girls" and to the boys. The parents bid them welcome, and ask to sit at the table; the *svats* civilly decline to do so on some pretext or other, but take their chairs and place them directly under the middle beam of the ceiling. When the girls notice this, they begin to whisper meaningly. The parents and the *svats* then proceed to discuss the match, and finally conclude the bargain; the other guests meanwhile sing an appropriate song (*Devitzy Krasavitzy*).

When the preliminary arrangements have been settled to mutual satisfaction, the mother whispers the bride, that *svats*

[1] [See cat. 116, p. 29—Analyst]
[2] [See cat. 116, p. 30—Analyst]

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svakha behind. The groom and the bride advance to his parents and salute them. The company sing a song of glorification. The young couple bow to the groom's parents, three times to each, kiss them and receive their benediction; then the bridal pair are led to the table, at which they sit down. The *droushka* takes the plate with bread and salt from the father and goes out of the room with it to the bride's house, to invite her parents to the feast.

SCENE 4TH. The *svakha* leads the bride away into another chamber, where she is to change her dress and rearrange her hair. The *svakha* takes the veil off the bride, undoes her hair, combs it and makes it up again into two braids, which she winds around the head and covers with a kerchief; this is the way the married women dress their hair.

SCENE 5TH. The bride is again covered with the veil and the *svakha* leads her out to the company, places her next to the groom and then solemnly pulls off her veil. This is the turning point in the ceremony, and from this moment the bride ceases to be a girl before the world and assumes the status of a married woman.

Somebody raps at the door.

SCENE 6TH. Enter the *droushka* with the bride's parents, who are welcomed with great honors and led to places near the head of the table.

Setting of the table. The *droushka* directs all the ceremonies of the feast. He first calls upon the *svakha*, who represents the groom's mother, to take out of the oven whatever she has and to set it upon the table. The *svakha* tries to remove the oven lid, but cannot do so and asks for help. The *droushka* then directs his friends to help her, and with songs, indicating the difficulty of the work, the young men of the groom's party pull off the lid and draw out the pots, which they place upon the table; the songs accompanying these actions are: "*Doobinoushka*" (No. 19)[1] and "Bold Mustaches"—*Oussy* (No. 14).[2]

The Feast. The whole company sit down to the table (except the *droushka* who sees that every guest has plenty of everything), cross themselves, asking a blessing and fall to. After they have eaten for a while, the best man offers a glass of

[1] [See cat. 116, p. 40 — Analyst]

[2] [See cat. 116, pp. 37–38 — Analyst]

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brandy on a plate to the groom's father, who tastes of it, but makes a wry face and says: "*gorko*" (bitter). The *droushka* puts a piece of sugar into the glass, the father tastes it again and repeats, "*gorko.*" Then the *droushka* asks the young couple to sweeten the drink; they thereupon rise, bow to the old man and kiss each other three times; the father then drains the cup with evident satisfaction, saying: "Ah, this is good." The same ceremony is repeated with the other relatives and guests, some of whom even insist on repeated sweetenings, to tease the young couple—especially if they see that the bride is bashful. The company, meantime, joke and sing appropriate songs. This scene is represented in the well known picture of Makovsky, called a Boyar's Wedding.

The presentation of gifts from the bride to the groom's relatives. The *droushka* first leads out the groom's father to a chair in the middle of the room, where he asks him to sit down; then the *droushka* approaches him with a glass of brandy on a plate, accompanied by the *svakha* with a present and by the young couple. They all bow to the father and ask him to accept the offerings. The *droushka* using a formula like this: "The young prince and the young princess do homage to you with a low bow and a bowl of festal mead. They beg you to accept the cup, to drain it and to cover the bottom—not with a dime or a dollar, but with a piece of gold; and if you have not that, half a dozen dollars will be acceptable to us and an honor to you." The presents consist of wearing apparel, gloves, kerchiefs, embroidered towels, etc. The father takes up the glass and tastes it, but refuses to drink, claiming it is too bitter; the young couple must sweeten it for him, just as before, which they finally do; when he drains the cup and accepts the present, they bow to him and kiss him. The mother of the groom is the next one to be led to the chair and given a present; she also asks for a sweetening of the drink, etc., and the same ceremony is gone through with all the groom's relatives.

In return for the teasing, each one puts a piece of money upon the plate. Songs enliven the proceeding, as for instance: "Glory to the Swan" (*Slava Lebediu*), etc.

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The feasting meantime goes on; the *drouzhka* treats everyone and asks the company to drink more. The songs at this time are: "I walk with the Wreath" (*So vyounom ya khojy*)[1] and "In the Meadows" (*Vo loosiakh*).[2]

The company gradually becomes more excited; they start to sing dance-songs; a young man and a girl come out into the middle of the room and start a jig dance, while the balance of the company sing the *Kamarinskaya* (No. 10)[3] or the "Entrance Hall"—*Sseny* (No. 9).[4]

The bride's parents ask everyone to their house, to finish the night. The guests jump up and bid good-bye to the bridal pair and to the parents of the groom, and go away, singing and dancing.

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[1] [See cat. 116, p. 44 — Analyst]
[2] [See cat. 116, pp. 35-36 — Analyst]
[3] [See cat. 116, p. 35 — Analyst]
[4] [See cat. 116, pp. 34-35 — Analyst]